



Neighborhood Planning Assembly Minutes

NPA:
(choose one)

Wards 1 & 8	Wards 2 & 3	Wards 4 & 7	Ward 5	Ward 6	All Wards
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Date of Assembly : 08 / 18 / 2021

Start Time: (*Commence*): 7:00 PM

Location: Zoom and Bushor Conference Room, City Hall

Finish Time: (*Adjourn*): 8:07 PM

Note taker: Tom Derenthal, revised and formatted by Kirsten Wilson (CEDO)

Steering Committee Members in Attendance:

Carol Livingston (Ward 1), Tom Derenthal (Ward 1), Jeff Comstock (Ward 7), Matt Hurlburt (Ward 7), and Evan Litwiń (Ward 4)

Discussion Topics

- **7:00 Context:** Recruiting/Electing NPA Representatives to Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting - *NPA Steering Committee Members*
7:10 **Legal Framework for Redistricting:** State and Local: City Attorney's Office – *Justin St. James, Asst. City Attorney*
7:25 **Q&A**
7:40 **Background:** City Council Resolution: Why; Who; What; When; Committee Charge, Responsibilities, and Expectations; What the City Council Plans to do with Committee Report – *Resolution Sponsors: Sarah Carpenter & Mark Barlow*
7:50 **Q&A**
8:00 **Adjourn**

Actions Taken / Decisions Made

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Zoom Attendees:

Alice Suitor	Tree Spaulding	Justin St. James	TOWN MEETING TV
Amanda	Stephen hamlin ward 7	Jane Stromberg	CEDO NPAs
Birgit Bozek	jeffcomstock	kathy olwell	Olivia (Muffie) she /her
Evan Litwin	Jack Hanson (he/him)	Lea Terhune	Pat Bradley
GS	Joe Magee (he/they)	Matt Hurlburt	Robert Bristow-Johnson

In-Person Attendees:

Councilor Sarah Carpenter	Carol Livingston
Councilor Mark Barlow	Jess Hyman
Tom Derenthal	

Agenda Items and Actions:

Context: Recruiting/Electing NPA Representatives to Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting - NPA Steering Committee Members – *Jeff Comstock*

- Meeting called to order by Jeff Comstock.
- Kirsten Wilson is the new CEDO liaison.
- Jeff recognized Carol and Jonathan (NPA Wards 1&8) for helping with the meeting and Evan Litwiń (NPA Wards 4&7) for creating promotional artwork.

- Context and purpose of the forum: The agenda has been adjusted so that Justin St. James [City Attorney's Office] can speak first on the legal framework and then Councilors Sarah Carpenter and Mark Barlow will help explain the Resolution.
- A Representative from each NPA Steering Committee declared when their next NPA meeting is scheduled. NPA Wards 4&7 has the earliest meeting next Wed, August 18th.
- The goal of the next meeting is to generate citizen interest in the Ad Hoc Committee for Redistricting and select each ward's representative to the Committee.
- There is a schedule built into the Council's Resolution. (See Signed City Council Resolution attached.)

Legal Framework for Redistricting: State and Local: City Attorney's Office – Justin St. James, Asst. City Attorney

- Redistricting is the process of adjusting the electoral district boundaries to meet constitutional requirements of equal representation. This is performed every 10 years and based on the corresponding census data (the Census is required by the Constitution to be done every 10 years).
- The US House: Each state gets one seat plus additional seats based on apportionment. The districts for each seat are geographic subdivisions of relatively equal-sized populations. Creating these districts is known as redistricting.
- The same rules apply to all levels of government, including the City of Burlington.
- Burlington currently has 7 Vermont house districts and to ensure equal representation, the City is responsible to draw ward boundaries, get voter approval, followed by legislative and gubernatorial approval.
- Some statutory factors considered when redistricting include:
 - Keeping neighborhoods intact using districts that are compact and contiguous
 - Following major roads
 - Academic institutions should be in more than one ward
- It's important to establish evaluation criteria [for changes] and keep a record how the criteria is met.
- The population difference across districts [largest minus smallest divided by the average] should be no larger than 10%.
- Census date is expected to arrive by Sept 30th.
- During redistricting, the City can change the structure of representation, including changing the types of divisions [currently wards and districts], the number of each and the number of Councilors per division.
- There are practical timeline constraints. For a charter change to be considered at Town Meeting Day, March 2022, it would need to be warned for the first time in December 2021. After voter approval, the changes are handled by the House Committee on Government Operations, followed by consideration by the full House and Senate.
- A PowerPoint created by the City Attorney's Office will be shared following the meeting. (See attached.)

Q&A with Justin St. James:

- Birgit Bozek: Do we know yet if the 10% criteria has been met in any ward? If there is no 10% population change can we live with what we have constitutionally?
 - Justin St. James: It's too early to know if the 10% criteria has been met. It's up to the Council and voters whether the current system fits the needs and wants of the City. The current system appears legal.
- Robert Bristow Johnson: Back in 2014, the criteria was set at +/- 10% from the mean ward [or district] size. So each ward could be no larger than the mean +10% or smaller than mean -10%. This is a larger window than you described.
 - Justin St. James: OK, the deviation may be as you state.
- Jeff Comstock: Do the variations from the mean apply at the state and municipal level or are there different criteria for each?

- Justin St. James: At the state level, a deviation greater than 10% could be allowed if there's a reasonable policy to justify a larger deviation. Municipalities are typically more strictly held to the 10% limit.

Background: City Council Resolution: Why; Who; What; When; Committee Charge, Responsibilities, and Expectations; What the City Council Plans to do with Committee Report – Resolution Sponsors:
Sarah Carpenter & Mark Barlow

Councilor Barlow:

- The Council thought it would be better to get the redistricting process going early even though we don't have the census data yet, as last time it took almost 2 years to complete.
- The Mayor in a press release said the Burlington population has increased by 2,326 to 44,743. There are also 1500 new homes.
- The granular census data is not yet available, so it's not certain that redistricting is required but we wanted to have a committee to look at the potential issues around redistricting and share their feedback on the current system, including any recommended changes for a new system.
- What we're asking the Committee to do is meet and oversee at least 2 public meetings and collect public opinion on redistricting. This could include the current configuration of wards and districts.
- We also want to collect feedback on the satisfaction with the number of Councilors per ward and size of the Council.
- Other important criteria to consider include the location of polling places and incumbency of current councilors.
- The Resolution says by the last meeting in October that the Council will take the recommendations and from the Committee, create a resolution that incorporates the recommendations received, and give that work to the mapping specialist who in turn will create one or more maps for the Council to consider and select for inclusion.
- Ideally, the Council's redistricting charter change will be voted on at Town Meeting Day 2022.

Councilor Carpenter:

- The schedule is tight, but it's important to get everything on the table and collect public input. The public input is the charge of the Redistricting Committee. It's important to determine what is working and not.
- If there is a population deviation by 10%, one important consideration is neighborhood identity. The New North End is different from the Old North End which is different from the Hill Section and South End. Community interests differ with neighborhoods.

Councilor Hanson:

- The job of the NPA [today] is not to determine the recommendations to bring to Council, but rather to select a candidate to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee.

Q&A with the City Councilors:

- Jess Hyman: Can delegates on the Committee get a stipend, or have a budget for outreach?
 - Councilor Carpenter: Council has not set a policy on this. Can CEDO clarify whether money for outreach can be used for this?
- Jeff Comstock: Can NPA's use their regular \$2500 budget on this?
 - Carol Livingston: This is a City task. Council has asked the NPAs to facilitate the representative selection, but the City should have budget allocated for the Committee.
- Carol Livingston: There are 20+ people in this forum, which is the same as our regular NPA meetings. We need to expand how we reach out to a larger group of our community.

- Evan Litwin: What is the role of the Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) Office in outreach and redistricting? How are racial demographics taken into account? My residence is on the border of multiple wards.
 - Councilor Carpenter: Racial demographics will be part of the census data. Conversations will follow. Council determined that NPAs are the best avenue for outreach and to get public input.
- Robert Bristow Johnson: Last time, after many delays, public involvement was through district builder SW. Is this part of the plan today?
- Jeff Comstock: How do you get people to engage?
- Lea Terhune: It's important that once a person is selected that they be in contact with the NPA. The Steering Committee should also decide the candidate's qualifications. Candidates should describe how they will meet the objectives of the Committee.
- Lea Terhune: Will the meetings be in-person and Zoom? Committee representatives should also be expected to report back to the Committee on what NPA feedback they receive regarding redistricting.
- Matt Hurlburt: What does racial diversity have to do with setting ward boundaries?
 - Councilor Carpenter: We have to be sensitive to how specific lines are drawn.
 - Justin St. James: Cannot draw lines on the basis of race, ethnicity and religion.
- Jeff Comstock: Have there been any inquiries from W5 or W6?
 - Kirsten Wilson: They are following their own process for promotion of the Committee.
- Jeff Comstock: To whom should NPA committee selections be sent? Who administers and manages the Ad Hoc Committee?
 - Councilor Carpenter: The Committee will be as independent as possible. Logistical support for the Committee is to be determined. They will pick a Chair and organize their own meetings and determine what support they need. The first Committee meeting is in mid-September.
- Jeff Comstock: We have time to determine this before the September 16th deadline. I hope the NPA Steering Committees working together can help launch the Committee.

Closing Questions and Comments:

- Birgit Bozek: What was the structure in the last survey? Was it NPA lead?
 - Jeff Comstock: This is a new approach. Before the last redistricting, there were 7 wards each with 2 representatives. Redistricting resulted in a new structure with 8 wards and 4 districts. Each ward and district elects a single councilor. Each district is composed of 2 wards.
 - Lea Terhune: Each NPA Ward chose one representative and an alternate in the last redistricting process. Alternates could only vote if the representative was not in attendance. So NPAs were involved last time. Three recommendations were sent to City Council.
 - Jeff Comstock: The role of the NPA this time is to create the committee and augment outreach to the public.
- Tom Derenthal: What is the handoff to the Council?
 - Matt Hurlburt: City Council expects recommendations around redistricting, but not a map. Council wants recommendations that will be incorporated in a resolution from which maps will be drawn.
- Jack Hanson: Council wants to know what is important to the community regarding structure, including the number of wards and/or districts, and how each should be represented. Council will then use the committee recommendations to guide a person who augment that with census data to draw maps.